



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental
Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114-2119

Deval L. Patrick
GOVERNOR

Timothy P. Murray
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Ian A. Bowles
SECRETARY

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Tel: (617) 626-1000
Fax: (617) 626-1181
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

Contact: Lisa Capone
(617) 626-1119
(617) 913-8973
Robert Keough
(617) 626-1109

State and Local Officials Launch 20th COASTSWEEP
Nearly 5,000 Volunteers Expected for Annual Shoreline Cleanup

BOSTON – Volunteers will fan out along the Massachusetts coastline today for the 20th annual COASTSWEEP, a cleanup of shoreline sites organized by the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) and the UMass–Boston Urban Harbors Institute. Organized cleanups are planned at more than 100 eastern Massachusetts beaches, river banks, marshes and underwater sites throughout September and October.

“Since it began in 1988 with just a few hundred volunteers, COASTSWEEP has grown to be the Commonwealth’s signature environmental cleanup – improving our coastal resources while raising public awareness about marine debris, shoreline litter and illegal dumping,” said Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Secretary Ian Bowles. “Last year, 3,000 volunteers removed 38,000 pounds of trash from 120 locations across 145 miles of the Commonwealth’s coast, making these places cleaner, safer and more inviting for people and wildlife.”

EOEEA Undersecretary for Environment Philip Griffiths and CZM’s new director Leslie-Ann McGee joined local officials, legislators, nonprofit organizations, and business leaders to kick off this year’s COASTSWEEP at South Boston’s Carson Beach.

“Every year, COASTSWEEP reminds us of how fragile our coasts are and that stewardship of the Massachusetts coast is a responsibility that every citizen should treasure,” said McGee, who takes office as CZM director on September 20.

As part of the nonprofit Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup, COASTSWEEP volunteers not only pick up trash, they record what they find and their data are logged onto a national database. Environmental agencies use these data to identify sources of marine debris and work on solutions to the problem.

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COASTSWEEP data have shown that nearly half of all trash collected originates from land-based activities such as picnics, festivals, sports events, and days at the beach. Cigarette butts, food wrappers and container caps and lids account for most of this tally. Illegal dumping is another source of unwanted debris. Recent COASTSWEEP events have turned up tires, outboard motors, shopping carts, 55-gallon drums, and household appliances.

“I cannot thank the COASTSWEEP volunteers enough for their passion, dedication and hard work in helping keep our beaches clean,” said Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan, Jr. “We are honored to host this year’s kickoff ceremony at Carson Beach, a DCR property that also represents the Commonwealth’s renewed focus on its ocean beaches.”

“As a lifelong advocate for the Commonwealth’s beaches, particularly those here in Boston, I consider COASTSWEEP among the premier environmental events of the year,” said Sen. Jack Hart. “I would like to commend all of the people who turn out year after year to clean up our shores.”

Rep. Brian Wallace added, “Each COASTSWEEP cleanup is organized by a local coordinator who spends hours rounding up volunteers, gathering supplies, publicizing the event and ensuring that the cleanup goes smoothly. We all benefit from the efforts of these hardworking volunteers.”

The Ocean Conservancy, which supplies CZM with trash bags, gloves and other materials for COASTSWEEP cleanups, got a boost at today’s news conference in the form of a generous donation from Bank of America.

“Bank of America is pleased to officially present the Ocean Conservancy with a \$100,000 grant to support their efforts to educate our nation about the importance of one of our greatest natural resources,” Bank of America Massachusetts President Robert E. Gallery said. “Bank of America understands the importance of this group’s mission and is happy to work with them toward our common goal.”

Said Ocean Conservancy Vice President Amelia Montjoy, “We are appreciative and proud of the dedication that volunteers show on behalf of the International Coastal Cleanup. It simply could not happen without their support. The generosity that Bank of America has shown to us also makes the International Coastal Cleanup a success. This support from Bank of America makes it possible for us to share a cleaner ocean and to raise awareness of the need for ocean conservation.”

For more information about COASTSWEEP, a list of scheduled cleanups and instructions on how to organize or volunteer for a cleanup, visit www.coastswEEP.umb.edu. COASTSWEEP 2007 co-sponsors include Dunkin Donuts, REI, New England Aquarium, Legal Sea Foods, Cape Cod Potato Chips, Tronex, Quest Diagnostics, the Massachusetts Marine Trades Association, and the Garden Club of Hingham.

(List of scheduled COASTSWEEP cleanups is attached.)

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